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RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL PRIORITY 6117  
RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA PRIORITY 4333  
RUEHNH/AMCONSUL NAHA PRIORITY 6738  
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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREF](#) [BM](#) [JA](#)  
SUBJECT: BURMA: SLAIN VIDEOGRAPHER'S BURMESE INTERPRETER  
NOW IN JAPAN

REF: TOKYO 5021

Classified By: Ambassador J. Thomas Schieffer per 1.4 (b/d)

¶1. (C) Summary: The Burmese interpreter for slain Japanese videographer Kenji Nagai is now in Japan thanks to the support of Nagai's former employer and close friend, APF News President Toru Yamaji. Since Nagai's death, Yamaji has been conducting a one-man campaign to pressure the Japanese Government to take further steps against the Burmese regime, and he and the interpreter have met with police officials and Diet members and appeared on television, calling for democratization in Burma. The two will meet next week with Foreign Minister Koumura. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Embassy Tokyo met November 7 with Magawng Naw Sam, the interpreter for late APF News videographer Kenji Nagai. Nagai was shot and killed September 27 by Burmese security forces, and his death, captured on film, has galvanized public opinion against the Burmese regime. Sam was accompanied by his Japanese guarantor, APF News President Toru Yamaji. Since Nagai's death, Yamaji has emerged as a spokesman for his close friend Nagai's family, and he has used his frequent television appearances to urge the Japanese Government to step up pressure on the junta. (Note: APF News is a news production company that produces documentary news footage for sale to Japanese networks. End Note.)

¶3. (C) According to Sam, he met Nagai for the first time on September 26, the day before Nagai's death. Sam had studied Japanese in Burma and, seeing Nagai on the street attempting to conduct interviews, offered to interpret for him and guide him around the city. The two were also together on September 27 and, shortly before Nagai was shot, he had asked Sam to check out how another part of the protest march was developing. That was the last time Sam saw Nagai, and Sam and several hundred others were subsequently detained by security forces.

¶4. (C) Sam was released a week later but, fearing that he would soon be identified by the police as the interpreter recorded on Nagai's video camera, contacted a Burmese exile group in Japan, the "Democracy for Kachin National in Japan" (Sam is ethnic Kachin). This group contacted APF President Yamaji, who confirmed with two Japanese nationals living in Rangoon that Sam was indeed Nagai's interpreter (all four had met on September 26 at a cafe). Yamaji contacted MOFA and urged the Embassy in Rangoon to issue Sam a visa. "This was the one good thing that MOFA has done," Yamaji said. Yamaji arranged for Sam's travel to Tokyo through Bangkok and, since Sam's arrival in Japan, has provided Sam's room and board.

15. (C) As a witness to the murder of a Japanese national, Sam has given testimony to the Japanese National Police. Yamaji has also arranged for Sam to meet with representatives of the Diet's Parliamentary League to Support Democratization in Myanmar (reftel) and to appear on television, with his face hidden from the camera. The two will meet next week with Senior Vice Foreign Minister Hitoshi Kimura, as well as Foreign Minister Koumura, to urge the Japanese Government to take further steps against the Burmese regime and seek the return of Nagai's personal effects, including his camera. Although Nagai's family is disconsolate, "they were heartened by the condolences offered by Secretary Rice," Yamaji said.

16. (C) Sam's visa will expire in January, and Yamaji plans to take steps to ensure that he does not have to return to Burma. One option is to seek political asylum or to have Sam receive a student visa. "This is the least I can do. Nagai believed in democracy for Burma, and this is what he would want."

SCHIEFFER